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GENEVA FOR PRM KATHERINE PERKINS;  
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LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

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SUBJECT: UNDER-AGE RECRUITMENT IN DARFUR REFUGEE CAMPS

¶1. (SBU) Summary: UNHCR protection officers in Darfur refugee camps in Farchana and Iriba report recent incidents of recruitment of under-age combatants for Sudanese rebel movements. Chadian officials assert that they are working to prevent recruitment and ensure the civilian character of the refugee camps but UNHCR officials believe that some Chadian authorities are complicit. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) During a September 15-21 field visit in eastern Chad, PolOffs met with UNHCR protection officer Daniela Raiman and UNHCR Representative Emmanuel Uwurukundo at the local UNHCR field offices in Iriba and Farshana. Raiman said that it is readily apparent to UNHCR staff that Sudanese rebels (mostly JEM) recruit in refugee camps. The rebels use the camps as R and R locations, where their wives (many are polygamous) and children live and are cared for. Raiman said that there is pressure for boys (ages unknown) to join rebel groups and that this can be difficult to prevent from happening since NGO and UN personnel return to their compound at dusk and are not in the camps on the weekends. Raiman said further that this is being done with the apparent blessing of Chadian authorities. Raiman cited the fact that operatives representing Sudanese rebels who recently entered the Kou Kou camp had letters signed by Sous-Prefects authorizing them to visit the camps. It is believed that recruitment is done on a commission basis. UNHCR Chief in Iriba Uwurukundo reported that the Minister of Mines and Energy (formerly Minister of the Interior), Mahamat Ali Nassour had visited Guereda, Iriba and Bahai camps to conduct a fact-finding mission.<sup>8</sup> UNHCR staff suspected rather that his delegation was involved in recruitment.

¶3. (SBU) UNHCR has on several occasions communicated its concern on camp recruitment to the Chadian authorities. UNHCR has also been conducting awareness campaigns in the camps and has visited camp schools to inform children of the dangers. Additionally, PolOffs raised the subject with the Prefect of Kobe who strongly condemned anyone participating in such activities. He mentioned an ongoing investigation in Touloum camp, adding that four suspects were under scrutiny<sup>8</sup> for participating in such activities. If the refugees were more forthcoming, Chadian officials would immediately pick up those suspected of recruitment and hand them over to the judicial system, said the Prefect.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: Unless UNHCR and the government of Chad move the camps further away from the border, rebels will continue to have direct access to a young recruitment pool. Given the prevailing martial culture and lack of other

employment opportunities, it is a very susceptible pool.  
TAMLYN